

Message Text

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ACTION EB-03

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 L-01 INR-05 NSC-05 NSCE-00

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R 051914Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4881

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 29232

LIMDIS

E.O. LL652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, FR, UK

SUBJECT: MARTINIQUE SUMMIT--CONCORDE

1. SUMMARY: THIS MESSAGE UPDATES PREVIOUS REPORTING RE US LANDING AUTHORIZATION FOR CONCORDE, WHICH FOREIGN MINISTRY HAS CONFIRMED WILL BE FOCUS OF GOF PRESENTATION IN RAISING CONCORDE QUESTION AT MARTINIQUE SUMMIT. END SUMMARY.

2. BRIEF ITEM IN NOV. 30 ISSUE OF PARIS-MATCH REPORTED THAT AT MARTINIQUE GISCARD WOULD ASK FOR LIFTING OF US BAN ON CIVIL SUPERSONIC OVERFLIGHT. WHEN QUERIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR, DE SAINT LEGIER OF FOREIGN MINISTRY SAID THERE WAS NO TRUTH TO PARIS-MATCH REPORT. ALL GOF WOULD BE SEEKING FROM US AT MARTINIQUE RE CONCORDE, HE SAID, WAS ASSURANCE THAT LANDING AUTHORIZATION WOULD BE FORTHCOMING FOR THOSE POINTS GOF WISHED SERVE IN US WHEN CONCORDE GOES INTO COMMERCIAL OPERATION. HE SAID THAT GOF HAD NO INTENTION OPERATING CONCORDE OVER LAND MASSES BECAUSE OF SONIC BOOM PROBLEM.

3. SEPTTEL REPORTS LATEST STATEMENT TO PRESS BY AIR FRANCE DIRECTOR GENERAL PEROL RE PLANS FOR CONCORDE SERVICE TO US BEGINNING IN 1976. JOURNALIST WHO WAS
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PRESENT TELLS US THAT PEROL ADMITTED PLANS FOR NEW YORK SERVICE HAD NOT YET BEEN FIRMED UP, BUT PEROL ADDED IT

WOULD BE "VERY DIFFICULT FOR AMERICANS TO REFUSE"
PERMIT CONCORDE TO LAND AT NEW YORK. (ALSO SEE PARIS
23723 AND PARIS 25788.)

4. EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT IN RECENT CALL ON
SECRETARY FRENCH AMBASSADOR INDICATED THAT AT
MARTINIQUE FRENCH WOULD RAISE QUESTION OF LANDING
AUTHORIZATION FOR CONCORDE AT LOS ANGELES. WE HAVE
HEARD NOTHING HERE ABOUT FRENCH INTEREST IN CONCORDE
SERVICE TO LOS ANGELES. CONCORDE DOES NOT HAVE RANGE
TO FLY PARIS-LOS ANGELES NON-STOP AS AIR FRANCE NOW
DOES WITH ITS BOEINGS. NOR COULD CONCORDE FLY AT
SUPERSONIC SPEEDS OVER CANADIAN OR US TERRITORY.
GOF AT PRESENT HAS RIGHTS TO SERVE LOS ANGELES VIA
MONTREAL BUT THIS WOULD PRESUMABLY NOT BE AS ATTRACTIVE
A ROUTE FOR CONCORDE AS VIA NEW YORK (OR EVEN
WASHINGTON, DC) FOR WHICH, HOWEVER, FRENCH WOULD HAVE
TO NEGOTIATE NEW TRAFFIC RIGHTS. EVEN WITH AN
INTERMEDIATE STOP AT MONTREAL OR ON US EAST COAST FOR
REFUELING AND DISEMBARKATION OF SOME PASSENGERS,
LOS ANGELES TERMINAL POINT DOES NOT SEEM TO MAKE MUCH
SENSE SINCE (A) TRAVEL ON THIS SECOND LEG AT SUBSONIC
SPEED WOULD DEPRIVE CONCORDE OF ITS ONE COMMERCIAL
ADVANTAGE WHICH IS TIMESAVING, AND (B) MUCH HIGHER
FUEL CONSUMPTION OF CONCORDE ENGINES AT SUBSONIC
SPEEDS WOULD GREATLY INCREASE SEAT/MILE COST AND ALSO
LIMIT RANGE TO POINT WHERE YET ANOTHER TECHNICAL STOP
FOR REFUELING MIGHT BE NECESSARY.

5. WE HAVE HEARD FROM AIR FRANCE AND FROM FRENCH
TOURISM OFFICIAL THAT SOME THOUGHT IS BEING GIVEN TO
INAUGURATING CONCORDE SERVICE TO BOSTON AS TIE-IN WITH
US BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION.

6. OBTAINING AUTHORIZATION FOR CONCORDE SCHEDULED
SERVICE TO JFK IN NEW YORK REMAINS, OF COURSE, THE
PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF THE FRENCH. WE ARE UNAWARE THAT
THEY OR BRITISH HAVE YET PRESSED NEW YORK PORT
AUTHORITY FOR A FORMAL STATEMENT OF ITS POSITION,
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PROBABLY THROUGH FEAR THAT THE ANSWER MIGHT BE NEGATIVE
AND DEFINITIVE. RATHER, TACTIC HAS BEEN TO SCHEDULE
TEST FLIGHTS TO AS MANY OTHER US POINTS AS POSSIBLE IN
THE MEANTIME; WHILE THESE FLIGHTS HAVE BEEN IMPORTANT
FOR CERTIFICATION AND OPERATIONAL REASONS, THEY HAVE
ALSO HAD PUBLIC RELATIONS VALUE IN CONTRIBUTING TO
"ACCEPTANCE" OF CONCORDE BY US PUBLIC. IT IS DOUBTLESS
THE EXPECTATION THAT TIME WORKS FOR EROSION OF
RESISTANCE TO CONCORDE BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES AT NEW YORK

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AND ELSEWHERE.

7. WE TAKE WITH A GRAIN OF SALT ALLEGED FRENCH DISINTEREST (PARA 2 ABOVE) IN FLYING CONCORDE AT SUPERSONIC SPEED OVER LAND MASSES. ABSENCE OF US BAN ON SUPERSONIC OVERFLIGHT WOULD NOT ONLY OPEN UP TO FRENCH SUCH POINTS AS LOS ANGELES (SUBJECT TO FURTHER NEGOTIATION AS NECESSARY) BUT, MORE IMPORTANTLY, WOULD ENABLE THEM TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITIES--HOWEVER REMOTE--FOR SALE OR LEASING OF CONCORDES TO US CARRIERS FOR USE ON DOMESTIC ROUTES. IF AT MARTINIQUE FRENCH DO ALLUDE WITH REGRET TO EXISTENCE OF US BAN, DEPT. SHOULD BE ALERT TO NEED TO REIMPRESS ON FRENCH BACKGROUND AND IMPLICATIONS OF BAN IN CONTEXT US SST DEVELOPMENT, FOR WE SUSPECT THAT IN FRENCH PUBLIC AND EVEN IN OFFICIAL CIRCLES SOME BELIEF LINGERS THAT US BAN WAS DIRECTED AGAINST CONCORDE.

8. AND FINALLY, LEST THERE BE ANY DOUBT THAT ALMOST EVERYTHING RELATING TO CONCORDE IS STILL VERY CLOSE TO THE TOUCHY SURFACE OF FRENCH NATIONAL PRIDE, WE NOTE THAT A UDR DEPUTY PROTESTED RECENTLY IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OVER PREPARATION OF THE OPERATIONS MANUAL FOR CONCORDE IN ENGLISH ONLY, WHICH BROUGHT FORTH PROMISE

FROM STATE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORT CAVAILLE THAT FRENCH
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LANGUAGE MANUAL WOULD ALSO BE PREPARED FOR AIR FRANCE
USE. IN REPORTING ABOVE, TODAY'S LE MONDE FEIGNS
OBJECTIVITY IN CRITICIZING SUCH LINGUISTIC CHAUVINISM
BY POINTING OUT THAT ENGLISH IS ACCEPTED COMMON
LANGUAGE OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL COMMUNITY.
HOWEVER, EVEN LE MONDE CANNOT RESIST POINTING OUT
THAT AFTER ALL, THAT TERMINAL LETTER "E" DOES GIVE
CONCORDE A FRENCH NAME, "WHICH IS IN ITSELF A FINE
VICTORY OF MOLIERE OVER SHAKESPEARE."
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